

VU Research Portal

Editing the Peshitta Old Testament

ter Haar Romeny, R.B.

published in

Bibbia e Corano: edizioni e ricezioni
2016

document version

Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

document license

Unspecified

[Link to publication in VU Research Portal](#)

citation for published version (APA)

ter Haar Romeny, R. B. (2016). Editing the Peshitta Old Testament: From the Nineteenth Century until Today. In C. Baffioni, A. Passoni Dell'Acqua, R. B. Finazzi, & E. Vergani (Eds.), *Bibbia e Corano: edizioni e ricezioni* (pp. 253–267). (Orientalia Ambrosiana; Vol. 5). Biblioteca Ambrosiana - Bulzoni Editore.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal ?

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

E-mail address:

vuresearchportal.ub@vu.nl

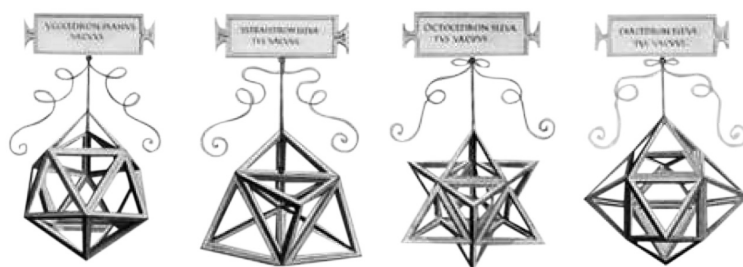


Orientalia Ambrosiana

ACCADEMIA AMBROSIANA

CLASSE DI STUDI SUL VICINO ORIENTE

Sezione Araba, Armena, Ebraica, Siriaca



BIBBIA E CORANO
EDIZIONI E RICEZIONI

a cura di
Carmela Baffioni
Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua
Rosa Bianca Finazzi
Emidio Vergani

BIBLIOTECA AMBROSIANA
BULZONI EDITORE

ISBN XXX-XX-XXXX-XXX-X

La collana «Orientalia Ambrosiana» è in distribuzione presso l'Editore Bulzoni.
Per l'acquisto di singoli volumi e la sottoscrizione di un ordine continuativo rivolgersi al medesimo.

Comitato scientifico	Carmela Baffioni (Italia), Malachi Beit Arié (Israele), Gianantonio Borgonovo (Italia), Sebastian P. Brock (UK), Valentina Calzolari (Svizzera), Paul Géhin (Francia), Gabriella Uluhogian (Italia), Jan Just Witkam (Olanda)
----------------------	---

<i>Direttore</i>	Pier Francesco Fumagalli
------------------	--------------------------

Segreteria di redazione	Carmela Baffioni (Arabistica), Rosa Bianca Finazzi (Armenistica), Anna Passoni Dell'Acqua (Ebraistica), Emidio Vergani (Siriaca)
-------------------------	--

Questa collana si avvale del sistema di revisione da parte di specialisti

© 2016
Veneranda Biblioteca Ambrosiana
20123 Milano (Italy) - Piazza Pio XI, 2
Proprietà letteraria e artistica riservata

Bulzoni Editore
00185 Roma, via dei Liburni, 14
<http://bulzoni.it>
e-mail: bulzoni@bulzoni.it

SOMMARIO

Prefazione

PIER FRANCESCO FUMAGALLI	pag.	V
--------------------------------	------	---

La presenza del Corano in letteratura e altri contesti

WILFERD MADELUNG

<i>Maslama al-Qurṭubī's use of the Qur'ān</i> <i>in his literary works</i>	pag.	3
---	------	---

CARMELA BAFFIONI

<i>Uso e interpretazioni filosofiche del libro sacro.</i> <i>La relazione intelletto agente/anima universale/materia</i> <i>nell'epistola 40 degli Iḥwān aṣ-Ṣafā'</i>	»	9
---	---	---

ANGELO MICHELE PIEMONTESE

<i>Il Corano in Italia umanistica</i>	»	31
---	---	----

MAURICE BORRMANS

<i>Les traductions françaises du Coran:</i> <i>présentation et évaluation.....</i>	»	67
---	---	----

Edizioni della Bibbia armena

PAOLO LUCCA

<i>Le edizioni a stampa della Bibbia armena (secc. XVI-XIX).....</i>	pag.	81
--	------	----

RICCARDO PANE

<i>Bibbia e liturgia nella Chiesa armena:</i> <i>il singolare culto dei Santi Traduttori</i>	»	99
---	---	----

S. PETER COWE

<i>Textual significance of the Armenian palimpsest</i> <i>from Sinai and its role in the edition of the Armenian Bible</i>	»	109
---	---	-----

Edizioni della Bibbia ebraica

ADRIAN SCHENKER

<i>La Biblia Hebraica Quinta</i>	
<i>Tre caratteristiche dell'edizione</i>	pag. 125

MARTIN RÖSEL

<i>The wealth of information.</i>	
<i>A close look at The Hebrew University Bible Project</i> »	133

JULIO TREBOLLE BARRERA

<i>"The Hebrew Bible: a critical edition".</i>	
<i>La edición de libros transmitidos en varias formas textuales:</i>	
<i>problemas y metodología</i> »	147

ALEXANDER ROFÉ

<i>Correzioni di carattere settario nei testi</i>	
<i>della Bibbia ebraica</i> »	165

La Peshitta. Dalle Poliglotte all'edizione di Leiden

PIER GIORGIO BORRONE

<i>Un progetto di Bibbia poliglotta</i>	
<i>di Giovanni Battista Raimondi e il ms. Firenze,</i>	
<i>Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Or. 58 (9a1)</i>	pag. 191

CLAUDIO BALZARETTI

<i>L'Antico Testamento in siriano</i>	
<i>dalle Poliglotte alle edizioni dell'Ottocento</i> »	229

BAS TER HAAR ROMENY

<i>Editing the Peshitta Old Testament:</i>	
<i>from the nineteenth century until today</i> »	253

Ricerche e approfondimenti

EMIDIO VERGANI

<i>Le tešbhātā del manoscritto M/34</i>	
<i>della Biblioteca Ambrosiana</i>	pag. 271

<i>Abstracts</i>	pag. 279
------------------------	----------

Commemorazioni

Enrico Rodolfo Galbiati, Sergio Noja Nosedà, Renato Traini.....	pag. 287
---	----------

<i>Informazioni accademiche</i>	pag. 305
---------------------------------------	----------

<i>Indice dei nomi di persona</i>	pag. 311
---	----------

EDITING THE PESHITTA OLD TESTAMENT:
FROM THE NINETEENTH CENTURY UNTIL TODAY

After the Peshitta Gospels had been printed for the first time in 1555,¹ the Peshitta Old Testament had to wait another 55 years before an *editio princeps* of part of it became available. It was in 1610 that the Syriac Psalter was printed, together with an Arabic translation in Syriac type, at the monastery of Quzhaya in the Qadisha valley in Lebanon. This publication is connected with the name of the Maronite bishop Sarkis Rizzi (Sergius Rissius), who had visited Italy, where he must have invited the master printer Pasquale Eli, who oversaw the printing together with the deacon Youssef ibn Amimeh. The first edition of most other Old Testament books appeared only in 1645, in the Paris Polyglot. The remaining books—Esther and deuterocanonical works such as Judith, Tobith, the Letter of Jeremiah, the story of Susanna, and 2 Maccabees—first saw the light in Brian Walton's 1657 London Polyglot. During the following century only a new edition of the Psalter was published as well as an edition of Ben Sira.² The nineteenth and twentieth centuries, however, have seen a number of editions of the Peshitta Old Testament, as well as several plans for Peshitta editions and aborted projects. This paper discusses those endeavours as well as the edition and translation projects now underway.

1. SAMUEL LEE'S EDITION AND ITS BASE TEXT

When Samuel Lee was preparing the Peshitta Old Testament on behalf of the British and Foreign Bible Society in the 1820s, he was rather critical of Brian Walton's work.³ The latter would not have been able to improve on the text of the Paris Polyglot. He also found that the collations made

¹ Now reprinted with an introduction by GEORGE A. KIRAZ, *The Widmanstadt-Moses of Mardin Editio Princeps of The Syriac Gospels of 1555*, Piscataway, Gorgias Press, 2006.

² JOHANN AUGUST DATHE (ed.), *Psalterium syriacum*, Halle, Orphanotropheum, 1768; JUDAH LÖB BEN ZE'EB, חכמת יהושע בן סירה, Breslau, Königl. preuss. privilegierten Grassischen Stadt-Buchdruckerey, 1798, and various reprints.

³ Letter quoted in PIET B. DIRKSEN, *Lee's Editions of the Syriac Old Testament and the Psalms, 1822-1826*, in ADAM S. VAN DER WOUDE (ed.), *In Quest of the Past: Studies on Israelite Religion, Literature and Prophetism: Papers Read at the Joint British-Dutch Old Testament Conference, Held at Elspeet, 1988*, Leiden, Brill, 1990, pp. 63-71, esp. 63-64.

by Herbert Thorndyke and given as an appendix to Walton's edition were far from reliable.⁴ In a way he echoed Walton's own criticism of the Paris Polyglot, in which, he stated, the Syriac text was presented 'mutilated'.⁵ However, neither of the two editors fully lived up to the expectations they raised. Walton did indeed add the books missing from the Paris Polyglot, among which Esther, Judith, and Tobias, as well as some missing words and verses. Other corrections are sparse, however, and for every correction one finds a number of new misprints.⁶ Thorndyke's collations, which were added in Volume 6 of the Polyglot, concern the Oxford manuscripts 12b1, 17a3, and 17a4, as well as the Cambridge codex 12d1. This material, which was indeed inaccurate and incomplete, was not used for the constitution of the text.⁷

Lee's own intention seems to have been to edit collations of a number of manuscripts,⁸ but this publication has never seen the light of day. The edition which he prepared for the British and Foreign Bible Society, which was meant for Syriac Christians in India, did not contain an apparatus. Though Lee had more manuscripts at hand than Thorndyke or Walton, including the famous Buchanan Bible (12a1), his use of these resources for the edition was very limited. His base text was Walton's Polyglot, which he corrected in a number of places, but many incorrect readings were left, and new misprints were introduced.⁹ In short, the text Lee offers goes back, through Walton, to the Paris Polyglot. Therefore it will be important to see which manuscripts were used for this edition.

The Syriac text of the Paris Polyglot was prepared by the Maronite Gabriel Sionita, who also vocalized it and translated it into Latin. Unfortunately, the main manuscript used was 17a5, Paris BnF syr. 6. This manuscript has been described as 'the worst of all known MSS of the Peshitta'.¹⁰ It contained many errors, often due to homoioteleuton, but in addition, a second hand has entered many new readings. Some of these go back to other Paris manuscripts (13a1 and 17a6), but others seem to be conjectures

⁴ SAMUEL LEE, *Remarks on the Collation of Syriac MSS*, «Classical Journal», XXIII, 1821, pp. 245-49, esp. 247.

⁵ See LEO HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta des Alten Testaments mit Rücksicht auf ihre Textkritische Bearbeitung und Herausgabe*, Münster, Verlag der Aschendorffschen Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1927, p. 63.

⁶ Thus for Isaiah Gustav Dietrich counted 1 correction, 5 orthographic changes, and 22 new misprints in Walton's text: DIETRICH, *Ein Apparatus criticus zur Peschitta zum Propheten Jesaia*, Gießen, A. Töpelmann, 1905 (BZAW 8), p. xiv.

⁷ W. EMERY BARNES, *The Peshitta Psalter according to the West Syrian Text*, Cambridge, University Press, 1904, p. xxxi.

⁸ LEE, *Remarks on the Collation*, 245.

⁹ Cf. for instance W. EMERY BARNES, *The Printed Editions of the Peshitta of the Old Testament*, «Expository Times», IX, 1897-98, pp. 560-2, esp. 560; DIETRICH, *Ein Apparatus criticus*, p. xiv; and HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta*, pp. 65-66.

¹⁰ BARNES, *The Printed Editions*, p. 560.

on the basis of the Hebrew or Vulgate.¹¹ These new readings were probably added by Sionita himself for the use of the printers, as they were indeed adopted in the text of the Polyglot.

2. THE URMIA EDITION

The 1852 Urmia edition has received very mixed reviews. There is no doubt that Justin Perkins, the American missionary responsible for the publication, used Lee's edition. The question is to what extent locally available manuscripts were also involved. Barnes found that Chronicles was a mere reproduction of Lee 'in Nestorian characters with Nestorian vowels and with improved spellings',¹² whereas he considered the Psalter a 'genuine Nestorian text of great value'.¹³ Diettrich stated that for Isaiah, the Urmia edition had 'grafted' an East Syriac twig onto the Western text of Lee.¹⁴ For Song of Songs, John Emerton also found clear indications for the use of East Syriac manuscripts, whereas the presence of Western readings could indeed point to the use of Lee.¹⁵ On the other hand, for Leviticus, David Lane did not see a reason to consider Urmia 'more than a minor modification of Lee'.¹⁶ Though he noticed a certain movement towards the standard text, there is nothing to suggest 'consistent use by Perkins of manuscript material'.

Piet Dirksen's study of Perkins's publications and the archives of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions would seem to confirm the latter assessment.¹⁷ Perkins's major purpose was to make the biblical text available in the East Syriac script and spelling, in order to respect sensitivities of the East Syrians. Textual details were certainly not the main issue, though indeed some manuscript evidence was used. Perkins himself listed the availability of biblical manuscripts as follows:¹⁸

¹¹ BARNES, *The Printed Editions*, p. 560; ID., *An Apparatus Criticus to Chronicles in the Peshitta Version*, Cambridge, University Press, 1897, p. xvi; DIETRICH, *Ein Apparatus criticus*, pp. xiii-xiv; HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta*, pp. 61-63; and for the use of 13a1 and 17a6 (which differs from book to book), JOHN EMERTON, *The Printed Editions of the Song of Songs in the Peshitta Version*, «Vetus Testamentum», XVII, 1967, pp. 416-29, esp. 418-21.

¹² BARNES, *An Apparatus Criticus*, p. xv.

¹³ BARNES, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xxxii; cf. also his *The Printed Editions*, p. 561.

¹⁴ DIETRICH, *Ein Apparatus criticus*, p. xvi.

¹⁵ EMERTON, *The Printed Editions*, p. 422-26.

¹⁶ DAVID J. LANE, *The Peshitta of Leviticus*, Leiden, Brill, 1994 (MPI 6), pp. 141-42.

¹⁷ PIET B. DIRKSEN, *The Urmia Edition of the Peshitta: The Story Behind the Text*, «Textus» XVIII, 1995, pp. 157-67.

¹⁸ JUSTIN PERKINS, *A Residence of Eight Years in Persia among the Nestorian Christians*, Andover, Allen, Morrill & Wardell - New York, M.W. Dodd, 1843, p. 15 (as quoted by DIRKSEN, *The Urmia Edition*, p. 167).

1. Pentateuch: 'not so rare as some other portions'
2. Rest of the Old Testament till Psalms, minus Chronicles: 'few'
3. Chronicles: 'very rare'
4. Psalms: 'comparatively numerous'
5. Prophets: 'rare'
6. New Testament: 'more numerous than of any other portions except the Psalms.'

This listing explains the findings mentioned before, in particular the big difference between Barnes's assessment of Chronicles and that of Psalms. Though the basis of the Urmia edition is always Lee's text, Perkins did adopt some readings from manuscripts available to him, in particular in Psalms. Whilst some readings adopted by Perkins are closer to the Hebrew text, the wish to adapt the text to a limited extent to some local witnesses seems to have been the main issue. However, the edition should certainly not be considered a consistent revision. Lee's text always remains clearly present.

3. THE MOSUL EDITION

Diettrich demonstrated that the Mosul edition, published by the Dominicans in 1888, used the Urmia edition: in Isaiah it copied 7 printing errors from Urmia.¹⁹ When Sebastian Euringer asked the Dominican mission about the base text of the edition, he received the reply that Mar Clemens-Joseph David, the Archbishop of Damascus who had been involved in the edition, had prepared the text 'on the basis of that of the Protestants [i.e., the Urmia edition] and a manuscript of the seventeenth century *ayant aussi sous les yeux les textes hébreu, grec et latin*'.²⁰ In practice the editorial activity was rather limited.²¹ Diettrich found for instance for Isaiah that the number of readings in the Mosul text not shared by Lee or Urmia was limited to no more than 28 for the whole book, six of which were printing errors.²²

It is possible that the seventeenth-century manuscript just mentioned was 17c1 (no. 112 in the library of the Chaldean Patriarchate at Mosul), as

¹⁹ DIETRICH, *Ein Apparatus criticus*, p. xv.

²⁰ SEBASTIAN EURINGER, *Die Bedeutung der Peschitto für die Textkritik des Hohenliedes*, in OTTO BARDENHEWER (ed.), *Vom Münchener Gelehrten-Kongresse: Biblische Vorträge*, Freiburg i.Br., Herder, 1901 (Biblische Studien 6.1-2), pp. 115-28, esp. 123.

²¹ Certainly if compared to David's 1877 edition of the Psalms, where other manuscripts and versions indeed played a major role; see SEBASTIAN P. BROCK, *A Neglected Revision of the Peshitta Psalter*, in CARMEL MCCARTHY – JOHN F. HEALEY (edd.), *Biblical and Near Eastern Essays: Studies in Honour of Kevin J. Cathcart*, London, T. & T. Clark, 2004, pp. 131-42.

²² DIETRICH, *Ein Apparatus criticus*, pp. xvi-xvii.

Wim Baars suggested to Emerton, but the latter found for Song of Songs that not all differences between Urmia and Mosul could be explained on that basis or on the assumption of influence from the Hebrew text, Vulgate or Septuagint. However, the new readings did have manuscript support.²³ Emerton presents this support as being divided over East Syriac and other, some very old, authorities. It is worthwhile to be more precise here, I think. What struck me when I examined them, is that all readings in Song of Songs which are unique to Mosul among the printed editions, and are neither supported by 17c1 nor constitute misprints, are found in 7a1.²⁴ Add to this the fact that all 22 real variants in Isaiah unique to Mosul among the printed editions are also supported by 7a1,²⁵ and it will be difficult to escape the conclusion that David had access to a copy of the facsimile edition of 7a1 published between 1876 and 1883 by Antonio Ceriani.

The hypothesis of the use of Ceriani's facsimile edition would explain why George Kiraz found relatively little differences between Mosul and the main text of the Amsterdam-Leiden edition.²⁶ This does not make the Mosul edition a good text, however. First of all, according to Kiraz there are still 185 instances where the two give different readings. The basis of the Mosul text remains the bad manuscript 17a5 with the alterations of Gabriel Sionita, which in not a few cases lacked any manuscript basis. Although the Urmia edition and to a lesser extent the Mosul edition themselves corrected readings in their *Vorlage* and they did so nearly always on the basis of Syriac manuscript evidence, neither of them was systematic or thorough in these efforts. In fact, the new enigma of the Mosul edition would be the limited and unsystematic use of 7a1; as the Hebrew text or Vulgate cannot have been the criterion in at least one case in Song of Songs and in many in Isaiah,²⁷ one wonders why and when David decided to adopt readings from 7a1. What is clear is that the fact that the Mosul edition was in no way a critical edition has to do with its purpose: '*Mgr. David de bonne mémoire avait en consideration les catholiques syro-chaldéens, non pas les orientalistes*', as the answer ran that Euringer received from the Dominican mission.²⁸ Second, even if Mosul had been corrected systematically on the basis of 7a1, it had brought us closer only to the main

²³ EMERTON, *The Printed Versions*, pp. 427-28.

²⁴ Apart from one detail, the reading ܡܡܨܪ for ܡܡܨܪ in Song 1:2, which may actually be an error as well.

²⁵ With a minor difference in Is 21:13, where Mosul reads ܡܡܨܪ whereas 7a1 has ܡܡܨܪ.

²⁶ GEORGE A. KIRAZ, *Textual Sources and Editorial Policies of the Antioch Bible*, in SAMIR KHALIL SAMIR - JUAN PEDRO MONFERRER-SALA (edd.), *Graeco-latina et orientalia. Studia in honorem Angeli Urbani heptagenarii*, Córdoba, CNERU, 2013, pp. 181-188, esp. 182-183.

²⁷ Cf. the discussion in MOSHE H. GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Peshitta*, in his *Text and Language in Bible and Qumran*, Jerusalem-Tel Aviv, Orient Publishing House, 1960, pp. 163-204, esp. 201-204.

²⁸ EURINGER, *Die Bedeutung*, p. 123.

text of the Amsterdam-Leiden edition, whereas, as we shall see, the original Peshitta readings are often to be found in the apparatus.

The conclusion must be that the Mosul edition cannot be used for serious study of the Peshitta, whether one has scholarly or ecclesiastical purposes, or both. It is a mixed text with an inferior basis and it contains readings foreign to the tradition of the Peshitta, even if it is true that most of these readings crept in at the stage of Sionita's work rather than that of David.²⁹ It should therefore be regretted that the Mosul text was chosen as the basis of the recent Antioch Bible project.³⁰

4. CERIANI'S FACSIMILE OF THE MILAN PESHITTA AND OTHER PROJECTS BEFORE THE SECOND WORLD WAR

In 1869 Antonio Maria Ceriani published a short study of the editions and manuscripts of the Peshitta, also proposing a critical edition.³¹ Instead of this edition, in 1876 he started publishing a facsimile edition of the Milan Peshitta manuscript B 21 Inf., now also known as 7a1, using the then new technology of lithography.³² This publication, mentioned above in the context of the sources of the Mosul edition, was an absolute landmark in Peshitta studies, as scholars for the first time got access to a Peshitta text that was really different from the text of the Paris Polyglot. However, the high number of readings where the Ambrosian Peshitta went with the Hebrew text against the other known witnesses was not assessed in the same way by everyone. Thus Carl Heinrich Cornill, who counted 86 such readings for Ezekiel, immediately assumed that the text of the codex had

²⁹ As noted above, Mosul's Isaiah and Song of Songs do not contain unique readings without manuscript support. In other books, there may be isolated cases where readings are based on other sources, as Euringer's informant suggested. Thus Kiraz (*Textual Sources*, p. 184) mentions divergence from the Syriac tradition in Esther 10:4-16:24. In general, however, it seems that Euringer's informant may have thought of the procedures in David's earlier Psalms edition; see note 21 above. It should also be noted that for the Mosul edition of the complete Bible, David did not accept the idea, defended by others, that missing verses or chapters should be added on the basis of the Vulgate. For the discussion about this in the years before the edition was printed, see JACQUES MARIE VOSTÉ, *La Pešittā de Mossoul et la revision catholique des anciennes versions orientales de la Bible*, in *Miscellanea Giovanni Mercati* 1, Città del Vaticano, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, 1946 (Studi e testi 121), pp. 59-94.

³⁰ George Kiraz's attempt to separate the Mosul edition from the other printed editions and thus from 17a5 does not convince me (*Textual Sources*, pp. 183-84), given the material he presents himself. And as stated, it should be added that 7a1 or the main text of the Amsterdam-Leiden Edition is not *the* Peshitta.

³¹ ANTONIO M. CERIANI, *Le edizioni e i manoscritti delle versioni siriane del Vecchio Testamento*, Milano, Bernardoni, 1869 (Memorie del Reale Istituto Lombardo di scienze e lettere: classe di lettere e scienze morali e politiche 11 [3.2]), esp. pp. 16-17.

³² ANTONIO M. CERIANI, *Translatio syra Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex Codice Ambrosiano sec. fere VI photolithographice edita*, Milan, Angelo della Croce et J.B. Pogliani, 1876-1883.

been adapted to the Hebrew. He considered the publication ‘money thrown out of the window’.³³ He was answered with different arguments by Alfred Rahlfs and later by Emery Barnes,³⁴ and appears to have been convinced already by the former.³⁵

Still, even though the Ambrosian Peshitta yielded many new and better readings and Rahlfs had devised the method for a critical edition, and in spite of many calls for such an edition, the pessimism already voiced by Theodor Nöldeke in an 1869 review of Ceriani’s initial study would seem to have prevailed in these decades. On the basis of the corruptions which he found in Aphrahat and Ephrem’s Peshitta, Nöldeke had concluded that the Syriac version of the Old Testament had been ‘handled very carelessly and arbitrarily, particularly in the earliest period of its existence, from which we have no manuscript’.³⁶ Even those who started out with high hopes abandoned their efforts at some stage, often disillusioned, as we shall see.

Why Ceriani did not follow up on his earlier plan is not precisely known. The new possibility of making the oldest complete manuscript available by lithography had of course its attractions, especially since he considered its text far superior to that of the printed editions. In addition, he already had good experience with the technique because of the Syro-Hexaplaric manuscript he published in 1874.³⁷ A proposal made by the exegete Rudolf Cornely in 1885 was not executed, perhaps because of the fact that the Mosul edition answered the needs of the Catholic Church in the Middle East.³⁸ An announcement made during the last years of the nineteenth century by Beer (probably Georg Beer) and Carl Brockelmann to publish a critical edition with the Reuther & Reichard publishers of Berlin never led to a publication either.³⁹

³³ CARL HEINRICH CORNILL, *Das Buch des Propheten Ezechiel*, Leipzig, J.C. Hinrichs, 1886, pp. 140–45.

³⁴ ALFRED RAHLFS, ‘Beiträge zur Textkritik der Peschita’, *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 9 (1889), pp. 161–210, esp. 180–92; BARNES, *An Apparatus Criticus*, pp. xxii–xvi.

³⁵ According to a letter quoted by BARNES, *An Apparatus Criticus*, pp. ix–x.

³⁶ THEODOR NÖLDEKE, review of CERIANI, *Le edizioni*, «Literarisches Zentralblatt», XLI, 2 October 1869, 1185–86.

³⁷ ANTONIO M. CERIANI, *Codex Syro-hexaplaris Ambrosianus, photolithographice editus*, Milan, Bibliotheca Ambrosiana, 1874 (Monumenta sacra et profana 7). For Ceriani and the background to the edition, see now EMIDIO VERGANI, *An Introduction to Ceriani’s Reprint of the Ambrosian Manuscript B 21 Inf. (Codex Ambrosianus 7a1)*, in the Gorgias reprint of Ceriani’s work: ANTONIO M. CERIANI, *A Facsimile Edition of the Peshitto Old Testament Based on Codex Ambrosianus (7a1): Translatio syra Pescitto Veteris Testamenti ex Codice Ambrosiano sec. fere VI*, Piscataway, Gorgias Press, 2013, pp. vii–xiii.

³⁸ JACQUES MARIE VOSTÉ, *Projet d’une édition critico-ecclésiastique de la Pešittā sous Léon XIII*, «Biblica», XXVIII, 1947, pp. 281–86.

³⁹ The Brockelmann-Beer plan is mentioned for instance in EBERHARD NESTLE, *Syriac Versions*, in JAMES HASTINGS (ed.), *Dictionary of the Bible* 4, New York, Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1902, pp. 645–52, esp. note to 651. HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta*, p. 115, also mentions plans by Jakob and Nöldeke.

Gustav Diettrich certainly had plans for a critical edition, at least of Isaiah, but after he published the Masoretic notes on Isaiah as a preliminary study,⁴⁰ Eberhard Nestle advised him to adopt the idea of publishing only collations in order to get ‘quicker and cheaper’ to the necessary complete critical edition of the Peshitta.⁴¹ It was this advice which he followed in his 1905 publication of the critical apparatus to Isaiah, quoting as an additional reason the fact that he would not like to have money spent on a critical edition before a number of Church Fathers, whose significance for the reconstitution of the text he had come to appreciate, had been edited critically.⁴²

Very interesting is the case of William Barnes, who published a critical apparatus to Chronicles and a critical edition of Psalms, as well as variant readings to the Peshitta of 2 Kings.⁴³ He seems to have been the most likely person to edit the Peshitta Old Testament as a whole, but he wrote to Leo Haefeli in 1914 that he had no plans for such an edition.⁴⁴ What he did publish in the same year was a revised edition of Lee’s *Pentateuch* for the British and Foreign Bible Society, without apparatus.⁴⁵

In 1898, in an article on the printed versions of the Peshitta, Barnes already realized how much work would be involved in a full critical edition,⁴⁶ but he may not have realized then that the Psalter, which was published in 1904, would take him ‘a considerable part of my best working time during the past seven years’.⁴⁷ In 1898 he also still thought that ‘the gain should be worth all the labour’, even though he warned his readers not to expect a ‘perfect Peshitta’, as even the best manuscripts would not allow an editor to remove all (early) corruptions.⁴⁸ What seems to have caused him disappointment is the fact that the work on the Psalms showed him that the method proposed by Rahlfs could not be fully realized in practice. Rahlfs had suggested that one would be able to construct a text antedating the division between the East and West Syriac churches on the basis of the combined evidence of two separate streams of manuscripts: the Eastern and Western groups.⁴⁹ In 1898 Barnes already knew that there were problems with the rationale of this method—that is, Rahlfs’s supposition that after the split

⁴⁰ Gustav DIETRICH, *Die Massorah der östlichen und westlichen Syrer in ihren Angaben zum Propheten Jesaia*, London - Oxford - Edinburgh, Williams and Norgate, 1899.

⁴¹ EBERHARD NESTLE, review of DIETRICH, *Die Massorah der östlichen und westlichen Syrer*, «Theologische Literaturzeitung», 1900, pp. 36-37.

⁴² See DIETRICH, *Ein Apparatus criticus*, p. viii.

⁴³ BARNES, *An Apparatus Criticus*; ID., *The Peshitta Psalter*; ID., *The Peshitta Version of 2 Kings*, «The Journal of Theological Studies», VI, 1904/05, pp. 220-32, and XI, 1910, pp. 533-42.

⁴⁴ HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta*, p. 115.

⁴⁵ W. EMERY BARNES - CHARLES MITCHELL - JOHN PINKERTON (edd.), after Samuel Lee, *Pentateuch Syriace*, London, British and Foreign Bible Society, 1914.

⁴⁶ BARNES, *The Printed Editions*, p. 562.

⁴⁷ BARNES, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. vii.

⁴⁸ BARNES, *The Printed Editions*, p. 562.

⁴⁹ RAHLFS, *Beiträge zur Textkritik*, pp. 164-65.

between the churches mutual influence could practically be excluded—, but he still accepted the method as a general rule.⁵⁰ In 1904 he had to confess: ‘I doubt now whether the attempt [to apply it] was wise’,⁵¹ and ‘There never was a time (so it seems to me) since the writing of our earliest MSS at which the Nestorian text did not exercise its influence upon Western MSS.’⁵² In other words: all the time spent on the edition had not led to the reconstruction of a text older than the split between East and West Syrians.

Most negative is perhaps Leo Haefeli, who moved from Switzerland to Rome in 1914 to start the preparations for a text-critical study and edition of the Peshitta of the Old Testament. Unfortunately, the war forced him to return to his homeland, and only afterwards he took up the material again and wrote a volume, which is a real handbook for editors of the Peshitta.⁵³ Because of the situation in post-war Germany, where it was to be published, it appeared only in 1927. Paradoxically, Haefeli describes in detail which steps to take, including travels to the Middle East and collation of all manuscripts, but then concludes that all these efforts are basically in vain, unless older manuscripts are found—which he does not expect to happen. Still following Rahlfs’s method, he states that the text-critical work he described will, on the basis of the material available at that moment, at best yield the archetype of the two text types, which constitutes ‘by no means the original or translation text’.⁵⁴ If no new material becomes available, he continues, it will be best to edit the Ambrosian Peshitta with a small apparatus of Eastern and Western readings.

Moshe Goshen-Gottstein explains Haefeli’s negative attitude (1) on the basis of the time and efforts spent in vain on the collation of the printed edition, which eventually all appeared to go back to the Paris Polyglot; (2) the trouble caused by Rahlfs’s method, which in practice did not work, if only because of the lack of early Eastern manuscripts; and (3) the controversy over the position of the Ambrosian Peshitta, which continued even after Cornill had admitted that his earlier negative assessment of the manuscript was a mistake, and which had as a side effect that once the positive assessment prevailed, scholars started to see it as *the* Peshitta, thus neglecting other ancient witnesses.⁵⁵

I would add the following to the point of the neglect of other witnesses. Haefeli and others failed to recognize the importance of such manuscripts as 5b1 (British Library, Add. 14,425) and 9a1 (Florence, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Or. 58), even though Rahlfs had already pointed at least

⁵⁰ BARNES, *The Printed Editions*, pp. 561–62.

⁵¹ BARNES, *The Peshitta Psalter*, p. xlv.

⁵² BARNES, *The Peshitta Psalter*, pp. xli–xlii.

⁵³ HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta*.

⁵⁴ HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta*, pp. 113–16, quotation on p. 113.

⁵⁵ GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *Prolegomena*, pp. 166–68.

to the former.⁵⁶ In fact, the discussion on these manuscripts, which often stood closer to the Hebrew text, was a repetition of the discussion on 7a1. This time, however, Barnes, the champion of 7a1, joined the other side. In contrast to 7a1, he saw 5b1 and 9a1 as standing alone.⁵⁷ For this reason, he thought it more likely that their text had been adapted to the Hebrew. John Pinkerton for 5b1 and Diettrich for 9a1 argued against this,⁵⁸ but at that stage the discussion did not lead to a clear conclusion and Haefeli overlooked part of it.⁵⁹

It was in 1929, not long after the belated publication of Haefeli's work, that optimism returned in a message about the Chicago Peshitta Project.⁶⁰ This project has given us, among others, a partial edition of Barhebraeus' *Storehouse of Mysteries*⁶¹ as well as a number of dissertations on Dionysius bar Salibi, but nothing more was said about the project after the Second World War.

5. THE IOSOT PESHITTA PROJECT

After the war, the idea of an edition was revived among biblical scholars. The significance of the Qumran finds had not become clear yet, and reconstructions of the Hebrew text on the basis of the Septuagint were being criticized. In that climate, reliable access to another ancient witness was deemed a necessity. At the 1953 Congress of the International Organization for the Study of the Old Testament (IOSOT) in Copenhagen, the Danish scholar Erling Hammershaimb suggested that the Organization undertake an edition project,⁶² and in 1954, Goshen-Gottstein presented his ideas to the 23rd International Congress of Orientalists in Cambridge.⁶³ The latter may have had plans to edit the Peshitta as part of the Hebrew University Bible Project, but eventually it was William D. McHardy from

⁵⁶ RAHLFS, *Beiträge zur Textkritik*, p. 198.

⁵⁷ On 5b1: W. EMERY BARNES, *A New Edition of the Pentateuch in Syriac*, «The Journal of Theological Studies» XV, 1914, pp. 41-44; on 9a1: ID., *An Apparatus Criticus*, p. xxx, and ID., *The Peshitta Psalter*, pp. xvi-xviii.

⁵⁸ JOHN PINKERTON, *The Origin and the Early History of the Syriac Pentateuch*, «The Journal of Theological Studies» XV, 1914, pp. 14-41 (and cf. already Ceriani, *Le edizioni*, p. 9); DIETRICH, *An Apparatus criticus*, pp. xxx-xxxii.

⁵⁹ Cf. HAEFELI, *Die Peschitta*, pp. 10-11.

⁶⁰ MARTIN SPRENGLING, *The Syriac Old Testament*, «The American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures», XLV, (1929), p. 146.

⁶¹ MARTIN SPRENGLING - WILLIAM C. GRAHAM (edd.), *Barhebraeus' Scholia on the Old Testament 1. Genesis–II Samuel*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1931 (Oriental Institute Publications 13).

⁶² For the initial years of the project, I made use of ARIE VAN DER KOOIJ, *The Peshitta Project at Fifty* (privately circulated).

⁶³ GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *Prolegomena*, see esp. n. 1 on p. 163.

London who was invited to serve as editor-in-chief. This happened at the 1956 IOSOT Congress, where it was also decided that it would be an *editio minor*, printing the text of 7a1 with variants of a limited number of other manuscripts in an apparatus—the result of the consultations of a committee set up by IOSOT to investigate the matter.

In 1959 McHardy, who had begun to prepare editions of the Minor Prophets and Jeremiah, decided to step down because of other obligations. The fact that he was appointed Regius Professor of Hebrew in Oxford in that year may very well be connected to this. The role of editor-in-chief was taken over by Piet de Boer from Leiden who was appointed at the 1959 IOSOT Congress. De Boer convinced Leiden University to give him space to set up a centre for the project, and this is how the Peshitta Institute was born.

The Institute quickly started inviting collaborators from all over the world, it issued instructions for the collation of manuscripts, and it prepared the preliminary edition of the *List of Old Testament Peshitta Manuscripts*, which appeared in 1961 and to which the assistant-editor Wim Baars and also Marinus Koster contributed very much. In the years 1962–67 Piet de Boer and Wim Baars travelled all over the Middle East to locate and photograph manuscripts in churches and monasteries. Manuscripts unknown when the *List* was published were described in subsequent volumes of the journal *Vetus Testamentum*, in so-called ‘Peshitta Institute Communications’. Up to this day the microfilms obtained during these expeditions and those received from the various European and American libraries form the main asset of the Institute.⁶⁴

One of the problems dealt with when the first fascicles were prepared is the fact that the application of the IOSOT committee’s decision to publish an *editio minor* left some room for discussion. Now that so many manuscripts were available, it was clear that the edition should be based on a full study of the tradition. But which manuscripts should be selected for the apparatus? The ‘General Preface’ to the 1966 *Sample Edition* speaks of ‘a more or less representative array of manuscripts as will illustrate the tradition of the Peshitta text,’⁶⁵ but in practice this remained a rather large group. In those days, however, the edition had to be typeset by hand in lead type, and Brill warned that the costs of printing would become too high. Mainly for this reason, I suspect, De Boer decided to limit the apparatus to manuscripts from the twelfth century and earlier.⁶⁶ The volumes published before 1977 still quoted witnesses dating up to the nineteenth century. This

⁶⁴ The microfilms of Middle Eastern manuscripts are now being digitized in cooperation with the Hill Museum and Manuscript Library, and they will be made available to all.

⁶⁵ *General Preface*, in PESHITTA INSTITUTE LEIDEN, *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version: Sample Edition: Song of Songs-Tobit-4 Ezra*, Leiden, Brill, 1966, p. vi.

⁶⁶ PIET A.H. DE BOER, *Peshitta Institute Communication XVI: Towards an Edition of the Syriac Version of the Old Testament*, «*Vetus Testamentum*», XXXI, 1981, pp. 346–57, esp. 356.

was a decision much criticized by collaborators, as in textual criticism one can exclude manuscripts only if their text has been demonstrated to derive from existing earlier manuscripts. However, in hindsight, it can be defended. Though full proof cannot be given, the impression already recorded by Goshen-Gottstein⁶⁷ that the later manuscripts do not contain unknown variants that cannot be explained as inner-Syriac corruptions or changes has generally been confirmed by the full collations made for all books and stored at the Peshitta Institute.

Another decision likewise met with criticism: the decision to allow emendations in the main text no longer resulted in a fully diplomatic edition of 7a1. The policy in the first volumes was to correct ‘obvious clerical errors that do not make sense’,⁶⁸ which was already problematic. Some mistakes are obvious, but do not yield an impossible reading: why would one retain them? Or: if one starts correcting mistakes, why not finish the job and publish a critical edition rather than a diplomatic one? The goal was obviously to produce a text that could be used in practice. In 1977, De Boer went one step further and decided also to emend the basic text of the edition if it ‘is not supported by two or more manuscripts from the material used up to and including the tenth century.’⁶⁹ This introduced the idea of a majority text. The reason was, again, financial: it was important to make the apparatus as lean as possible. Variant readings where 7a1 stood against the whole tradition caused long lines of witnesses in the apparatus and were therefore not economical.

De Boer defended his decisions claiming practical and financial reasons. But his choices have to do also with his approach to the edition and how it should be used. The choice for 7a1 itself had been a practical one in the first place, as he states:⁷⁰

Codex Ambrosianus has been chosen as the basic text for practical reasons: its age, completeness, clear hand and accessibility, and the existence of a facsimile edition. It must be emphasized that it has not been chosen because we regard the manuscript as the most important witness for reconstructing the original Peshitta version—which Codex Ambrosianus certainly is not.

De Boer explains that the text and apparatuses always have to be used together. It is the readers who have to make their choices from the apparatus, and the main text has no special status in itself: it is just a text against which one could collate other manuscripts in an economical fashion, as it takes a central position in the tradition. He also confesses that he is disap-

⁶⁷ GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *Prolegomena*, pp. 168-174.

⁶⁸ PESHITTA INSTITUTE LEIDEN, *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version: General Preface*, Leiden, Brill, 1972, p. viii.

⁶⁹ PIET A.H. DE BOER, *Preface*, in PESHITTA INSTITUTE LEIDEN, *The Old Testament in Syriac according to the Peshitta Version 1.1. Preface: Genesis–Exodus*, Leiden, Brill, 1977, p. viii.

⁷⁰ DE BOER, *Towards an Edition*, p. 356.

pointed by the way colleagues started quoting the main text of the edition as *the* Peshitta—which it is not.⁷¹

6. TOWARDS A CRITICAL EDITION

The fact that the IOSOT committee and De Boer did not choose a critical edition has to do with the availability of material—for instance, the Church Fathers were not collated for the edition—and with a general sense of insecurity, given the lack of very early manuscripts and the question whether a reconstructed text would not be based on wishful thinking.⁷² An important problem was certainly also the fact that the issues which had been discussed in the period before the Second World War were still waiting to be solved: the question of the Western and Eastern text forms as well as that of the position of manuscripts with readings standing closer to the Hebrew text. In the meantime, the latter issue had become entangled with a discussion on possible targumic origins for the Peshitta.

One is tempted to agree with Goshen-Gottstein, who already in the 1950s had asked for an additional apparatus where the editors would state what their preferred readings were.⁷³ After all, one cannot expect, as De Boer in fact did, that all readers would be able to make informed choices from the apparatus. An editor by definition knows more, and leaves ‘half the work undone’, as Goshen-Gottstein rightly states, if he does not inform the reader about his preferences. On the other hand, it is true that the points of view on very central issues were still so much apart, that a critical edition could have led to readings being recommended of which we now know that they arose later in the Syriac tradition. This brings us to the progress in Peshitta research over the past decades.

Many of the collaborators of the Peshitta edition decided to write studies on ‘their’ book, and the availability of the new edition also sparked others to study the text, tradition, and translation technique of individual Peshitta books. These studies, often but not exclusively published in the Institute’s own monograph series, led to important conclusions regarding the issues mentioned above. Many of the results of this fruitful period of research were magisterially brought together, elaborated, and enhanced by Michael Weitzman. Thus it is now clear that the division between Western and Eastern texts, which Barnes found to be problematic for Psalms,

⁷¹ DE BOER, *Towards an Edition*, pp. 356-357.

⁷² DE BOER, *Towards an Edition*, p. 355.

⁷³ GOSHEN-GOTTSTEIN, *Prolegomena*, p. 200 n. 172,

was actually absent for other books.⁷⁴ It is now also clear that the Peshitta does not go back to one of the Targumim⁷⁵ and that readings standing closer to the Hebrew text have a good chance of being original.⁷⁶ This does not mean, however, that we can always follow manuscripts such as 5b1 or 9a1, which contain many of such readings. In the earliest stage of the development of the text, there was a certain fluidity. Thus 5b1, 9a1, and such patristic witnesses as Ephrem and Eusebius of Emesa have preserved many original readings, but they also exhibit some of the new readings, and sometimes in places where the rest of the tradition has kept the original translation.⁷⁷ Choices should be made on a case by case basis.

Given these steps forward, it is no longer tenable to deny the possibility or desirability of a critical edition. This does not mean that there are no problems left. Thus we may be able in many cases to determine the oldest reading in the extant evidence, but this is not necessarily the original reading. The problem of the distance between the original translation and the oldest witnesses already signalled by Nöldeke still exists. Conjectural emendation is a possibility, but how far should one go in this? One possibility, suggested by Weitzman, is to propose such conjectures but only within the context of an apparatus.⁷⁸ Another problem is the fact that the readings of the Fathers, which can be of great help, still need to be collected and assessed. Still, once one recognizes that a critical text is never a definitive product, but just the editor's best guess—which is given together with an apparatus—there is no reason to wait any longer.⁷⁹

Even in a critical text the apparatus remains very important. This is not just because one would like to be able to check the editor's choices, but also because the main text is no more than the oldest attainable text form, the form from which one can explain the other readings. Those other readings remain important, depending on one's purpose. Thus for the textual criticism of the Hebrew Bible and the study of translation technique of the Peshitta, one would like to get as close to the original as possible. But for the study of the Syriac exegetical and liturgical traditions, the later forms are at least as relevant, just like one needs Plato's original text for the study of his philosophy in his own days, but the medieval text forms are also necessary in order to understand medieval European philosophy and its use of Plato.

⁷⁴ MICHAEL P. WEITZMAN, *The Syriac Version of the Old Testament: An Introduction*, Cambridge, University Press, 1999 (University of Cambridge Oriental Publications 56), pp. 306-308.

⁷⁵ WEITZMAN, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 86-129.

⁷⁶ WEITZMAN, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 272-80.

⁷⁷ BAS TER HAAR ROMENY, *La réception des versions syriaques de la Bible: l'apport des citations patristiques*, in F. BRIQUEL CHATONNET – PH. LE MOIGNE (edd.), *L'Ancien Testament en syriaque*, Paris, Geuthner, 2008 (Collection études syriaques 5), pp. 173-91, esp. 179-84.

⁷⁸ WEITZMAN, *The Syriac Version*, pp. 292-300.

⁷⁹ A fuller discussion is found in my *Choosing a Textual Basis for the New English Annotated Translation of the Syriac Bible*, «Aramaic Studies», III, (2005), pp. 167-86.

7. CONCLUSION

In 2014, after the closure of the Leiden Institute for Religious Studies (the former Faculty of Theology) of which it was part, the Peshitta Institute moved to the Vrije Universiteit in Amsterdam. Its staff is presently working on the publication of the last three volumes of the edition. The proofs of the Jeremiah, Lamentations, and Baruch volume have just been corrected. It is our hope that within three years after this publication, the volume with Ben Sira and the Book of Women can be printed. Another three years later the final volume of the Amsterdam-Leiden Peshitta should follow, containing 3 and 4 Maccabees and completing the series of seventeen edition volumes. In the meantime the electronic text, which is now being made available through the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon as well as through commercial Bible software, will be further elaborated and the next volumes of the concordance, which is based on it, will be produced. On the agenda is also a revision of the *List of Peshitta Manuscripts*.

In addition, we are working with collaborators all over the world on *The Bible of Edessa*, a new English annotated translation of the Peshitta. It will be based on a virtual critical text, but a very limited apparatus-in-translation will also show 7a1 (wherever we depart from it) and the later standard text. This ‘virtual critical text’ is in fact how De Boer intended the edition to be used: our translators will use the text and apparatuses together, and make their own choices.⁸⁰ Given the amount of work still ahead of us, a one-volume critical *editio minor*, where the editor’s choice will be printed as the main text in Syriac, is a prospect for the long term. Such an edition, which will also be useful to the Syriac churches, will only be possible because we stand on the shoulders of the many Peshitta scholars of the past 150 years.

⁸⁰ See the article mentioned in the preceding footnote.

